

Message Text

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INFO AMCONSUL MILAN

AMCONSUL FLORENCE

AMCONSUL GENOA

AMCONSUL NAPLES

AMCONSUL PALERMO

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 ROME 10257

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, IT

SUBJECT: CONVERSATION WITH GIUSEPPE SARAGAT

SUMMARY. IN A DETAILED PRIVATE DISCUSSION ON JUNE 20 EX-PRESIDENT GIUSEPPE SARAGAT TOLD ME THAT THE PCI REMAINS AN AUTHORITARIAN PARTY AND THAT ITALY IS VERGING ON A SITUATION ANALOGOUS TO THAT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1948. HE STATED THAT THE PCI, BECAUSE OF THE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE IT RECEIVES FROM THE SOVIET UNION, IS BY FAR THE WEALTHIEST POLITICAL PARTY IN ITALY AND THAT THE UNITED STATES MUST FIND A WAY TO HELP FINANCE THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES "WITHOUT CORRUPTION". HE LAUDED PRESIDENT CARTER'S CAMPAIGN FOR HUMAN RIGHTS AND AGREED THAT THE US MUST BATTLE THE SOVIET UNION ON THE IDEOLOGICAL FRONT. SARAGAT ALSO HAD PRAISE FOR DC PRESIDENT ALDO MORO, WHO HE SAYS "HAS HEART" AND INTELLIGENCE, BUT HE REFERRED TO PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI AS "CYNICAL" AND "THE MOST DANGEROUS POLITICIAN IN ITALY". THOUGH HE OFFERED NO PROOF, HE
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SAID THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION THAT CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE SOVIET UNION ARE BEHIND THE CURRENT FAR-LEFT POLITICAL TERRORISM IN ITALY. END SUMMARY.

1. I HAD A LONG AND DETAILED PRIVATE CONVERSATION WITH GIUSEPPE SARAGAT, FORMER PRESIDENT OF ITALY AND PRESIDENT-EMERITUS OF THE PSDI, IN THE PRIVATE STUDY

OF HIS HOME OUTSIDE OF ROME. SARAGAT, THOUGH HE WILL BE 80 IN A FEW MONTHS, APPEARED TO BE FIT AND SPOKE ELOQUENTLY AND AT TIMES EMOTIONALLY ON THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE AND THE THREAT WHICH THE PCI REPRESENTS TO ITALIAN DEMOCRACY.

2. SARAGAT SAID THAT THE PCI COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED A STALINIST PARTY, BUT HE EMPHASIZED THAT THE PCI LEADERSHIP REMAINS FAITHFUL TO THE IDEALS OF LENIN AND IS THEREFORE DEDICATED TO AUTHORITARIAN RULE THROUGH A DICTATORSHIP OF THE PROLETARIAT. HE ADDED THAT ITALY IS NOW ON THE VERGE OF A SITUATION ANALOGOUS TO THAT OF CZECHOSLOVAKIA IN 1948. PCI ENTRY INTO THE GOVERNMENT WOULD MEAN THE END OF ITALIAN PARTICIPATION IN NATO AND SHORTLY THEREAFTER A PRETEXT WOULD BE FOUND TO INVITE RUSSIAN MILITARY INTERVENTION IN ITALY. SARAGAT WARNED THAT SUCH A SITUATION WOULD COME ABOUT AUTOMATICALLY IF THE PCI EVER REACHED 40 PERCENT OF THE VOTE, AND ADDED THAT THE COMMUNISTS HAVE A GOOD CHANCE OF ATTAINING THAT MARK BECAUSE OF THE EXTENSIVE FINANCIAL BACKING WHICH THEY RECEIVE FROM THE SOVIET UNION. HE SAID THAT THROUGH PARTY-OWNED IMPORT-EXPORT ENTERPRISES THE PCI TAKES A FIVE PERCENT CUT ON ALL ITALO-RUSSIAN TRADE VENTURES AND THAT SUBSTANTIAL CREDITS ADVANCED RECENTLY BY ITALY TO THE USSR WERE THE RESULT OF PCI PRESSURE ON THE GOVERNMENT AND SEEN CONFIDENTIAL

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BY ITALIAN COMMUNISTS AS A MEANS OF REPAYING THE RUSSIANS FOR THEIR FINANCIAL BACKING. SARAGAT INSISTED THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES COULD NOT COMPETE ON AN EQUAL BASIS WITH THE PCI UNLESS THEY TOO RECEIVED FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND HE REPEATEDLY EXPRESSED THE HOPE THAT THE UNITED STATES WOULD FIND A WAY TO CHANNEL FUNDS TO THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES "WITHOUT CORRUPTION".

3. COMMENT: I POINTED OUT TO THE FORMER PRESIDENT THAT THE US UNDER PRESIDENT CARTER WAS EXPLORING MANY WAYS TO OPPOSE COMMUNISM AND THAT WE ARE NOW ATTEMPTING TO CHALLENGE THE RUSSIANS IN THE IDEOLOGICAL FIELD AND ON THE QUESTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS. SARAGAT PRAISED PRESENT CARTER'S STAND ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND AGREED THAT THAT AMERICAN POLICY HAD TO "FOLLOW THE EXAMPLE OF LINCOLN, WASHINGTON, AND JEFFERSON RATHER THAN THAT OF METTERNICH" IN ORDER TO BE EFFECTIVE. HE CONTINUED, HOWEVER, TO STRESS HIS VIEW THAT THE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES NEEDED AMERICAN FINANCING IN ORDER TO COMPETE WITH THE PCI. END COMMENT.

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4. SARAGAT STATED THAT THERE COULD BE NO QUESTION THAT THE CZECHS, ACTING ON ORDERS FROM MOSCOW, WERE BEHIND THE CURRENT WAVE OF FAR-LEFT POLITICAL VIOLENCE. WHEN I ASKED IF HE HAD ANY SOLID PROOF FOR SUCH AN ASSERTION, HE ADMITTED THAT EVIDENCE IN THE LEGAL SENSE WAS LACKING, BUT THAT CZECH INVOLVEMENT WAS SOMETHING OF WHICH ONE COULD BE CERTAIN IN THE SAME WAY THAT ONE COULD BE SURE THAT STALIN WAS RESPONSIBLE FOR THE MURDER OF MILLIONS OF RUSSIANS WITHOUT SEEING PHYSICAL PROOF. HE ADDED THAT GENERAL DELLA CHIESA OF THE CARABINIERI, WHOM SARAGAT CHARACTERIZED AS "THE MOST COURAGEOUS, MOST INTELLIGENT, AND MOST EFFECTIVE GENERAL IN THE ITALIAN ARMY", WAS ALSO CERTAIN THAT THE CZECHS BACKED URBAN TERRORISTS IN ITALY. (NOTE: DELLA CHIESA, WHO IS CURRENTLY IN CHARGE OF A CARABINIERE "ANTI-ESCAPE FORCE" WHICH PROVIDES EXTERNAL SECURITY FOR ITALIAN PRISONS, WAS AT ONE TIME HEAD OF THE CARABINIERI IN THE LIGURIA REGION, WHICH IS CONSIDERED THE HOME BASE OF THE "RED BRIGADES".)

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5. IN DISCUSSING THE CURRENT ITALIAN POLITICAL SCENE, THE FORMER PRESIDENT WAS EXTREMELY PESSIMISTIC ABOUT THE FUTURE OF THE SMALLER PARTIES AND STATED THE OPINION THAT THEY ARE SLOWLY DISAPPEARING. HE FREELY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT THE ITALIAN POLITICAL CLASS, HIMSELF INCLUDED, HAD MADE MANY MISTAKES OVER THE YEARS AND THAT NOW THE ONLY REAL HOPE FOR ITALIAN DEMOCRACY RESTED WITH THE DC. WHILE LAMENTING THE INFLUENCE OF THE CHURCH IN THE DC, HE SAID THAT THE PARTY IS STRONGLY DEMOCRATIC. HE HAD PARTICULAR PRAISE FOR DC PRESIDENT ALDO MORO, WHOM HE CHARACTERIZED AS A MAN WHO "HAS HEART AND INTELLIGENCE". HOWEVER, HE WAS CRITICAL OF PRIME MINISTER ANDREOTTI, STATING THAT ANDREOTTI, WHILE INTELLIGENT AND SHREWD, IS TOO CYNICAL TO GOVERN AND THAT HE IS PERHAPS "THE MOST DANGEROUS POLITICIAN IN ITALY", BECAUSE OF HIS OVER-ESTIMATION OF HIS OWN POWERS.

6. COMMENT: I WAS IMPRESSED BY SARAGAT'S PESSIMISM ABOUT ITALY'S FUTURE AND HIS FEARS ABOUT THE GROWING POWER OF THE PCI. HE CLEARLY FEELS THAT ITALIAN DEMOCRACY IS IN IMMEDIATE DANGER AND HE IS FRUSTRATED BY THE FACT THAT HE IS NO LONGER IN A POSITION TO INFLUENCE THE COURSE OF EVENTS. SARAGAT'S HIGHLY CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF ANDREOTTI APPEARS PERSONALLY MOTIVATED AND UNDOUBTEDLY REFLECTS HIS OWN STRONG PREFERENCE FOR MORO. WE DOUBT THAT HIS CHARACTERIZATION OF ANDREOTTI AS "DANGEROUS" IS SHARED BY MANY, EITHER WITHIN OR OUTSIDE THE PSDI. THOUGH THE PRIME MINISTER HAS MANY DETRACTORS AND IS VIEWED WITH A CERTAIN AMOUNT OF MISTRUST, HE IS GENERALLY RESPECTED FOR HIS POLITICAL ACUMEN AND JUDGEMENT. CONFIDENTIAL

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